



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Tompkins Square Middle School

Intermediate School 839

**600 East 6 Street
New York
NY 10009**

Principal: Mark Pingitore

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Reviewer: Stephen M. Drakes

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Tompkins Square Middle School is a learning community that provides for 337 students from grade 6 through grade 8. Forty-five percent of its students are Hispanic, 25% are Asian, 15% are Black and 15% are White. Spanish is the language spoken in the homes of many of the school's students. The 54 special education students represent 16% of the student population; and the 24 English language learners represent 7% of the student population. The school's recent immigrant group is small when compared to similar schools and City schools. The birth places of these students include Nepal, Vanuatu and the Dominican Republic.

Student attendance at the school is exceptional at 96% and is above similar and City schools. The school receives Title 1 funding.

Prior to the 2006/2007 academic year this school serviced only grade 7 and grade 8. In September of 2006 it added a grade 6. These students, along with the new incoming grade 7 students, now represent more than two thirds of the entire school population. This influx of new students presented the school with a number of challenges related to preserving the school's culture and meeting the needs of younger children.

The building also houses three other schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a strong leader with a focused vision that is shared by the learning community.
- The school is highly organized with systems in place to ensure order, safety and good school tone.
- Teachers are committed to quality instruction that engages all students in creative ways and challenges them on many levels.
- The school offers programs that challenge all of its students.
- Teachers improve their craft by participating in the many professional development activities offered by the school, the region and community based partners.
- The school curriculum provides for in-depth study and real-world applications in all content areas.
- Parents are true partners in the school community; and they are consulted informed and included in the decision-making process.
- The school's student attendance rate is exemplary.
- The school provides well for the emotional and social growth of its students.
- The high level of respect shared amongst all members of the school community allows for collaboration, valuable discussion and shared decision-making.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the management of data as it is used to provide for students in need of additional support services.
- Extend the analysis of the performance of groups to include differences in achievement between ethnic groups.
- Replicate successful academic intervention strategies across the grades.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

Since its founding just over five years ago, the principal and staff of Tompkins Square Middle School have created a culturally rich and intellectually stimulating environment for their students. The school takes pride in its many academic and social accomplishments and continually strives to do better. Its dedicated administrators and staff know their students well and go to great lengths to provide a substantive instructional program that is both meaningful and valuable in its real-world applications.

The school uses Understanding by Design as its curriculum framework and has created heterogeneous general education classes in core areas. It also employs a collaborative team teaching approach for some student groupings. In addition to the block and module programming it uses to provide students with extended time to be fully immersed in a discipline, the school supports its neediest students with many creatively designed academic intervention strategies. Each student's program is individualized to meet his or her needs. Students who excel in their studies are provided an opportunity to do challenging independent projects in the school's Pass with Distinction Contracts Program.

Teachers at the school are committed to quality instruction and are involved in a wide-range of professional development experiences throughout the school year and during the summer. The school demonstrates rapidly improving statistics when compared to itself and to other schools.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The administration and teachers of this school are very much aware of the importance of data as it is used to inform instruction and monitor student progress. As a result of this knowledge, the school uses many types of assessment tools to generate data from all of its constituents. The data the school gathers is compared across each grade, among grades and among schools in order to get a more accurate academic picture of each student. At present, there is less emphasis on some sub-groups than others, including analysis of performance related to gender and ethnicity.

The school makes good use of available test scores and other assessment data to understand each student's performance and provide them with individualized schedules to meet their needs and suit their aptitudes. Teachers look at student work in the classroom as a primary source of data on a daily basis. They use baseline data and interim assessments to plan lessons for groups of students and individuals. Data is further used and generated by the school's academic intervention strategy providers to plan interventions for at-risk students. The school is currently working on improving the

strategies to monitor the on-going progress of students who need academic intervention and mandated services.

The administration schedules ongoing meetings with students, teachers and parents that yield additional data. Each student is involved in an advisory program that enables teachers to monitor student progress in a setting that is non-academic. Teachers are involved in daily morning meetings, weekly staff meetings, monthly grade meetings, annual retreats, core department study meetings, summer professional development and new staff orientation. These meetings provide teachers with opportunities to have discussions about professional development, instruction, tracking and comparing student progress, sharing best practices and planning strategies for struggling students.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

Planning and goal-setting are grounded in the analysis of available data. This school community meets frequently to reflect, discuss student performance and plan long- and short-range goals to support student learning. One of the highlights of the year is the annual teachers’ retreat. This is a time when the entire staff comes together and takes a critical look at all of the data it and its partner, Teachers College, has collected. The group determines what their professional development needs are and what their students’ instructional needs are based on this data. This work becomes the foundation for a Comprehensive Education Plan that outlines goals for the school as a whole, groups of students and individual students.

Initial student placement is based on standardized State-wide tests, as well as elementary school records. Academic interventions are immediately put into place for students in need, using this information. Students who are identified as at risk are scheduled for extra support in small group classes such as Read 180 and are assigned additional three 50 minute sessions of extended-day support. Student performance is looked at and discussed by the school community on a daily, monthly, quarterly and annual basis to analyze the level of success of its curricula and academic intervention placements. In addition, data collected from student advisory and from parent meetings also impact on plans and goals set by the school.

High expectations and collaboration are motivating themes at this school. Staff create rubrics that are used by teachers to set clear standards for their students. Parents are true partners in the school community; and they are consulted, informed and included in the decision-making process. Parent meetings include intake interviews with their children’s advisor, parent teacher association meetings and parent teacher conferences. These parent meetings allow parents to share their hopes and dreams with the school staff, as well as other issues that may shed light on student performance. In addition to parent access to the school by way of the parent coordinator and monthly parent teacher association meetings, the principal maintains an open door policy and provides information electronically. The school uses the computer to provide parents with an on-line grading information system, to mail out monthly progress reports and to post weekly newsletters highlighting upcoming events.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

Decisions regarding hiring and placement of staff, schedules and budgetary allocations at this school are informed by data. This school has created a standards-based instructional program that is exciting and engaging, using Understanding by Design as a curriculum framework. Each student receives a program that has been individually crafted to meet his or her needs based on the results of various assessments. The school believes strongly that students learn best when they are immersed in their courses of study for substantial periods of time. Therefore, class schedules have been structured into nine-week module blocks and run in cycles so as to provide for in-depth study.

Each course of study is taught using student-centered methodology and real-world associations. Students in the science class learn and investigate as if they were scientists. Social studies students are historians when they study history and use the lens of a lawyer when studying the constitution or other legal documents. Teachers are held accountable for improved student outcomes and to that end differentiate instruction in order to meet the needs of the school’s wide spectrum of students including those who need additional support and those who need to be further challenged. Students are fully engaged in their coursework and take responsibility for their own learning.

The high level of respect shared between staff members and their students fosters good communication. Students feel comfortable about approaching their teachers and other adults concerning both academic and social concerns. This underscores the school’s interest in the emotional and social growth of its students. The exemplary attendance and punctuality rate are indications of good student engagement and the school’s growing success in this area. The school is currently involved in replicating effective academic intervention strategies across the grades to build on this success.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

This principal is a strong progressive leader with a focused vision that is shared by the learning community. He is well liked and respected by all at the school and in the neighborhood. He and his administration are clear in their expectations and model a behavior that is supportive of all constituents. The concerted efforts of all staff members enable the school to run smoothly. This is exemplified by the faculty conferences that are held every morning at which time pertinent information is shared, allowing all staff members to start the day well informed. The school is therefore highly organized with systems in place to ensure order, safety and good school tone.

The principal has made staffing one of his top priorities. The highly-qualified teacher candidate is the individual who has high expectations for and is sensitive to the middle school aged student and is familiar with the instructional initiatives in place at the school. Clear expectations are shared with those hired and a three-day training for new teachers is provided.

The school has an extensive professional development program that is the result of data-based collaborative decisions. In addition to making professional development decisions as a result of student data, class observations and department conferences, the principal meets with each teacher to help determine their professional development needs. Ongoing staff development is provided, in part, by school partners including Teachers College staff developers who provide professional development in the humanities and the Educational Change provides professional development in science. A resident coach provides professional development in mathematics. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on the professional development that they receive at their weekly meetings. These meetings also serve as a venue for the sharing of best practices. Other professional development opportunities include visits to other schools, inter-class visitations, lab sites and walkthroughs.

Professional development is conducted throughout the year and includes an annual staff retreat. Time during the retreat is devoted to analyzing the level of success of current school programs and goals and to plan for the future. The school also offers workshops and seminars during the summer at which time more than half of the staff participate.

All members of the school community are informed and are part of the decisions that impact on the instructional program. An example of this collaboration is the articulation between the organization that administers the after-school programming, Educational Alliance, and the day-school staff. The director of Educational Alliance attends many of the school meetings so that she has staff input and is able to provide adequately for the students who are mandated to attend.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school community is skilled at looking at itself. All teachers are reflective of their practice and vigilant in regard to monitoring student progress. All teacher plans and interventions include interim goals and diagnostic assessments. As a result, the school community is in a good position to adjust what it does to meet the needs of groups of students and individual students. The administration and the school-based support team actively review the progress of all intervention placements and make adaptations informed by data.

Regularly scheduled department meetings, grade meetings, school-based support team meetings and academic intervention team meetings facilitate the monitoring of the school's Comprehensive Education Plan and its curriculum. Time at these meetings is spent looking at these plans' long- and short-range goals and assessments through various lenses, making modifications where necessary and planning next steps. Lab sites provide similar opportunities to analyze and adjust. The administration continually studies the school's effectiveness on all levels, as it compares student progress across the grade, from grade to grade and in relationship to other schools; and it continues to develop the management of data as it is used to provide for students in need of additional support services.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Tompkins Square Middle School (IS 839)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score			X

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			X
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.			X
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X